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AUTHOR Askew, Billie; Fountas, Irene
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ABSTRACT

In Reading Recovery, the fostering of active learning begins immediately. The three actions children must learn to take from the beginning as teachers move into instruction are: do some reading "work" at the point of difficulty; take some initiative; and make some links between new items learned and existing knowledge. Active learners are constructive, self-directed learners: they monitor their own reading and writing; search for cues in word sequences, in meaning, and in letter sequences; discover new things for themselves; cross-check on information; repeat as if to confirm their reading and writing so far; self-correct, taking the initiative for making cues match, or getting words right; and solve new words by these means. Teachers can support children's active learning by systematically observing the child's actions and making the right moves. Contains 2 figures and examples from lesson transcripts. (RS)

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Active from the Start

Billie Askew

Irene Fountas

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A mother's appreciation

It could be ...

In her own words

The Running Record

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Judith C. Neal, Editor
The Running Record
California State University, Fresno
School of Education & Human Development
5005 N. Maple
Fresno, CA 93740
FAX (209) 278-0376
Email judithn@csufresno.edu

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Active From the Start

Billie Askew, Trainer of Teacher Leaders, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas
Irene Fountas, Trainer of Teacher Leaders, Lesley College, Boston, Massachusetts

As Kara walked into her lesson, she commented that the 'K' in her name was like the 'K' in Mrs. King's name on the door. When she sat down and began reading the book Mom, she commented on the details in the pictures and the teacher briefly commented as well. Then Kara turned the page to read and put her finger at the right side of the page to start reading.

Without talking, her teacher pointed to the left side of the page and Kara read, "Mom is cooking," with crisp pointing.

When she read, "Mom is reading the book," instead of, "Mom is reading," she started to read the sentence again and got her pointing right the second time. Her teacher gave her a few seconds and then said, "I like the way you worked that out." She then proceeded to read the book, always starting on the left side of the page, matching her spoken words with the words in the text. Kara commented on how much she liked that book and eagerly asked, "Can I read Dad next?"

To the observant Reading Recovery teacher, the behaviors of this child provide evidence of active processing. It was evident that Kara worked at difficulty and took initiative as she processed a simple text early in her program.

Children who fail to progress in reading have often become passive in their confusions (Clay, 1993). Starting during Roaming Around the Known, Clay calls for interactions that make children active learners. Roaming Around the Known is not merely continued observation; it provides the opportunity for the child to know what he knows and to know the 'actions' that are productive as he begins to build an early reading process. The child is in control!

The fostering of active learning begins immediately. "It is possible for [children] to gain some measure of independence on their tasks at any level, even the novice readers, if the tasks are appropriate, introduced well, and supported by interaction with a teacher" (Clay, 1991, p. 199).

When talking about early behaviors, Clay (1993b) offers the following caution:

> "Be careful not to establish a pattern where the child waits for the teacher to do the work. This is the point at which the child must learn that he must work at a difficulty, take some initiative, make some links. It is the general principle that needs to be established at this time, and it does not matter which types of cues the child is using. Different children will use different types, depending upon what is easy for them at this time" (p. 40).

This quote highlights three actions children must learn to take from the beginning as teachers move into instruction. These actions are described below, with examples from lesson transcripts.

1. Work at a difficulty.

Children need to learn early to do some reading "work" at the point of difficulty. The teacher's responsibility is to convey this general principle by using appropriate tasks within the child's reach and by offering support for problem-solving as needed. The following example illustrates the response of a teacher who knew a child could work out the problem after making

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an error in text reading.

C: [makes error]
T: O-o-o-o. Wasn't quite right, was it?
C: [reads page correctly]
T: Were you right that time?
C: [nods]
T: What are you going to do when you know it's not right?
C: I'm going to do it all over again.
T: Yes. Without me saying anything. When you know by yourself, I'm not going to tell you.

The ultimate goal is a reader who is 'working' at using all sources of information, using all previous knowledge, and selectively attending to aspects of print that will be helpful in the process. The 'work' is usually not hard. In fact, when it is not hard, the reader can proceed more efficiently and learns more about the process. When texts or tasks are too hard, the child will be less active and require more support from the teacher, thus taking the control away from the child.

2. Take some initiative.

From the start, the child must be encouraged to actively respond even if a solution to the problem is not expected by the teacher. What is important here is that the child is engaged in the process, that he understands that he can do something instead of passively waiting. The teacher provides opportunities for this initiative by choosing tasks and texts within the child's reach and confirming the child's efforts to solve problems. The teacher must know precisely what the child can do -- and so should the child!

Example 1: Confirming child's initiative

T: I like how you fixed that up after you realized it was in the wrong place. [During assembling of cut-up sentence.]

Example 2: Calling for some action even when solution is not expected

C: One day . . one day ['John' is problem word]
T: What do you know like that?
C: James.
T: Exactly. And his name starts the same way. 'John.'

Example 3: Calling for action following a 'told'

T: Could it be 'barked'? Would it begin with a 'b' like in Brandon?
C: Yes.

3. Make some links.

When something is completely new, it requires great effort to learn it. However, if the new item can be related to something already known, it is much easier to learn (Clay, 1993b). The following excerpts from lessons offer examples of the kinds of links that children make from the start.

Example 1: Child making links and teacher making links

C: Along comes Jake . . . like James!
T: It starts like James. Yes, it does.
C: /B/ [word is 'Ben']
T: Yes, it starts like your name. His name is Ben.

Example 2: Teacher linking to child's known to solve a problem

C: [difficulty with 'got' in text]
T: Let's read that sentence again, and when you get to this part you can use that letter [goes to 'g' in alphabet book] like 'ghost' to help you.
C: Maybe it /g/ got lost.

Example 3: Confirming child's linking after running record

T: I notice when you're reading that you really notice and find things that you know. When you read 'there' [pointing in book], you found 'the.' And it helps you read new words by finding parts you know. Sure does!

In early lessons, then, the teacher begins to establish a pattern of expectation that children will 'work' at a problem (one that is within their reach), take some initiative, and make some links without waiting for the teacher to do the work.

Clay (1993b) challenges Reading Recovery teachers by emphasizing from the beginning the importance that, "the child is aware that there are ways of working out what the text says in this book and it is the reader's job to find cues which guide him to the meaning" (p. 39). An example from an early lesson illustrates one teacher's response to this challenge.

T: Some of what you said here doesn't look right. Your job is to go back and make sure it looks right and makes sense.

Both teachers and children assume important roles in Reading Recovery lessons to insure that the children become active from the very beginning of their programs.

Role of the Child

As a child learns to be active in the first days of Roaming Around the Known, becoming firm and flexible with his core of knowledge and early behaviors, the tone is set for early lessons. The child is expected to continue using all he knows.

Active learners are constructive, self-directed learners who learn from activity and by discovery. They demonstrate the following literacy behaviors that lead to a self-extending system (Clay, 1993):

1. Active learners monitor their own reading and writing.

Monitoring begins early and is continually adapted. Teachers foster monitoring with prompts or calls to action found on pages 40-41 in the Guidebook, such as:

"Point to each one."
"Where was the hard bit?"
"What did you notice?"
"Were you right?"
"Try that again."
"I like the way you tried to work that out."

"These questions tell the child that you want him to monitor his own reading. The operation to be learned is checking on oneself. It is more important that the child comes to check on his own behaviour than that he be required to use all the sources of cues at this stage" (Clay, 1993b, pp. 40-41).

An interesting early example of confirming monitoring behaviors came from a teacher responding to a child who was

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becoming frustrated with an unknown word.

T: You found a tricky part! Show me that tricky part. Good job! It's important to be able to find the hard part because then I can help show you ways to make it easier. That's good work!

Reading Recovery teachers need to guard against inadvertently monitoring for children. The reader needs time to notice that something is not right and sometimes needs an appropriate prompt that gives him the opportunity to work the problem out for himself. Even a teacher's frown, or movement, or the reaching for the white tape can rob the child of an opportunity to learn to monitor for himself.

2. Active learners search for cues in word sequences, in meaning, and in letter sequences.

"The child who gives up searching becomes the problem reader" (Clay, 1991, p. 250). While children may be limited in their strategies for searching for sources of information early in their programs, there should be some active attempt to, "search for and use structure or message or sound cues or visual cues"(Clay, 1993b, p. 41).

Searching for information is an active process. The teacher can look for evidence of this process in the following ways:

- Does he look?
  Does he try to remember?
  Does he predict?
  Does he check?
  Does he test?
  Does he hypothesize?
  Does he recheck?
  Does he look again?
  Does he try something?
  Does he get it right?
  Does he discover new things?
  Does he look for what might help?
  Does he try to make links with anything he knows? (Clay, 1991)

Each of these questions guides the teacher to observe the active searching behaviors critical for building a strong reading process. The following examples illustrate the active nature of searching for sources of information in text.

Example 1: Challenge to use a source of information to solve a problem

T: You're going to figure this out. No trouble. Because you're good at using that first letter and making that make sense.

Example 2: Confirmation of searching for information and prompting for continued searching

T: You checked the picture so you know what would make sense. Start it again and read it quickly and see what would make sense.

3. Active learners discover new things for themselves.

From the very beginning of his program, the child needs opportunities to discover new things on his own. The teacher can foster these discoveries by confirming and celebrating them. The following example illustrates a child's discovery about print and the teacher's acknowledgement of the discovery.

C: [points to print 'g'] That's a different one.
T: That's 'g'. It is a different one. It's got some extra curly things on it but you knew it still said 'dogs.' All right!!

4. Active learners cross-check on information.

Cross-checking is an early behavior. "The child learns that one kind of information can be compared with another kind, and all information should agree in the solution" (Clay, 1993b, p. 41). In time, cross checking is superseded by more successful self-correction using many sources of information.

This is an example of early teaching for cross-checking:

C: [error: says 'tub' for 'bath')
T: It makes sense to say 'the tub,' but look, this word can't be 'tub.' It has to start with . . .
C: Bath.
T: How do you know that?
C: Because it starts with a 'b.'
T: Oh, you're checking the beginning of the words! Good thinking. That's going to help you a lot.

5. Active learners repeat as if to confirm their reading and writing so far.

Young children tend to return to the beginning of a line or a sentence to confirm a response. In addition to clearing away the memory of any previous error, it helps the child to recall forgotten cues, use relationships between words as cues, and arouse memories not activated on the first run (Clay, 1991). The following example illustrates one teacher's response to a child's self-initiated, successful rereading of text.

T: I like how you kept working on those tricky pages. You always went back to the beginning of the sentence to try it again, didn't you? That helped you a lot.

6. Active learners self-correct, taking the initiative for making cues match, or getting words right.

The role of error is very important in a constructivist view of learning. Ferreiro (DeVries & Kohlberg, 1987) argues that, "all learning methods which proceed by discovery and active construction must necessarily undergo error. When teachers do not allow errors to occur, they do not allow children to think" (p. 245). Reading Recovery sets the highest value on independent responding, and this must involve risks of being wrong (Clay, 1993b). A child must also have time to discover that not all is well, permission to work at the problem, and encouragement to discover something for himself.

Clay (1991) cites self-monitoring and self-correcting as important signals of developing control. Both appear early and persist as the best indicators of inner control in oral reading. Clay (1993b) suggests that the important thing about self-corrections is that the child initiates them because he sees that something is wrong, and he then calls up his own resources for working on a possible solution. The child learns more about the process each time he engages in problem-solving.

When a child has successfully self-corrected an error, he has practiced, "monitoring, searching, generating, checking, and choosing processes and they were all reinforced because success was contingent upon them" (Clay, 1991, p. 303). During this cognitive activity, the reader is open to new possibilities and the action seems to

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have high self-tutorial potential. The following example illustrates the process for one child during his text reading:

C: Our dog Sam likes to run [child stops] go.
T: I like how you are checking.
C: Our dog Sam likes to walk/run [child stops] go.
That word is 'go.' It can't be walk.
T: Read it again and see if you can work it out.
C: Our dog Sam likes to go for a run.
T: Does it look right and make sense now?
C: Yes.
T: Good work. Read on.

In this example, the child had an opportunity to monitor, to use what he knows, and to search for and check meaning against visual information. The reader was actively exploring possibilities and learning ways to solve problems. Clay (1991) describes the child as trying to put together all the angles of a piece of the jigsaw to fit in a particular slot. She suggests that his search ends when it makes sense within his knowledge of the world. Error played an important role, as it stimulated the child's active search for a solution. The searching behavior itself enabled the child to learn more about searching for information during the reading process.

7. Active learners solve new words by these means.

"The significant question at any stage of progress is not, 'How much does he know?' but rather, 'What operations does he carry out and what kinds of operations has he neglected to use?'" (Clay, 1991, p. 313). The following example illustrates attention given to the process of problem- solving:

T: I noticed over here you were doing some careful checking. Were you checking to make it look right?
C: Yes.
T: Find 'can.' [a known word]
C: [points to can]
T: You also did some careful checking when you said 'crab.' How did you know?
C: Because it starts with a 'c,' too.
T: Just like 'can.' Of course!! You used what you know about 'can' to help with another word.

From the beginning, a child builds a repertoire of processing experiences. "The competent children resourcefully cast around all their experience to find cues, strategies, and solutions. The appropriate questions are:

What do I know that might help?
How do I know this?
What can link up with this?
Is the message still clear?"
(Clay, 1991, p. 341).

To problem-solve, ultimately children must choose flexibly between alternatives. "What makes him more able to do this without assistance (independently) is being able to initiate or call up a range of different strategies over which he has a flexible control" (Clay, 1991, p. 292).

The Role of the Teacher

The teacher's role is built on her precise knowledge of the child during these early lessons. "Being able to observe and interact with a child in order to discover what he knows, understands, and can do, takes time, considerable knowledge and skill" (Wood, 1988, p. 224).

Teachers engage in the following actions to support children's active learning.

1. Teachers systematically observe the child's actions.

The teacher has several ways of knowing the child's repertoire and responding behaviors. *The Observation Survey* (Clay, 1993a) captures observable behaviors both in quantity and in quality. The teacher can know about the child's engagement, speed of responding, and ability to initiate, as well as the items he controls. While the front of the Observation Summary is a list of behaviors, the back reveals evidence of the child's 'action' or control of those behaviors. The initial Survey provides a baseline, but teachers need daily records--running records and lessons records--in order to capture changes in observable behaviors.

Daily running records and lesson records are critical for making shifts in teaching that are based on small changes in the child's learning. The individual nature of the teaching and daily record-keeping for on-going reflection enable teachers to provide powerful instruction that fosters acceleration.

While running records are analyzed with attention to the use of particular cue sources during text reading, teachers can also use the records to explore the actions initiated by the child. "The most strategic observations to make are all the oral responses to the written text, including true report, error, attack, repetition, self-correction, and comments on words and letters" (Clay, 1991, p. 212). Consider the excerpt from a child's running record in Figure 1. From this running record, the teacher has evidence that the child is initiating several

Figure 1

Shark in a Sack

√ √ √ √ √ √ √ √ [laughs, says "That's silly."]
√ √ √ √ √ √ √ √
√ √ √ √ √ √ √ √
√ √ √ √ √ √ √ bottle ["No, I don't know."]
jar

√ √ √ √ chicken/rooster/h/h/h/ √ √ √
hen T

√ √ √ √ √ √ √ pot/p/p/an/SC
pan

√ √ √ √ su √ √ √ √
lollipop

√ √ √
√ √ √
√ √ √

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helpful actions; for example, his behavior revealed several instances of monitoring and cross checking behaviors: he knew what he didn't know. The child searched for several sources of information and interacted with the text, actively commenting on its humor.

Not only is the child's use of different sources of information significant, but also his initiating several attempts, being dissatisfied that all cues matched, and continuing to puzzle out the situation, sometimes successfully and sometimes not. When he was not successful, he knew his final attempt was still not satisfying. This processing behavior is active, so the child is learning about the process of reading by reading.

Daily lesson records can also provide the teacher with evidence of the child's active processing behaviors. For example, in the 'Strategies' column, teachers record strategies (1) used and (2) prompted. Careful documentation yields information about what the child initiated and how the teacher fostered the child's processing. The excerpt from a child's lesson record in Figure 2 provides a sample.

This lesson record offers evidence of the child's active processing. The teacher's prompts and confirmations led to or reinforced the child's active reading work.

2. Teachers make the right moves.

Knowing the child's precise repertoire and responding history enables the teacher to make the right moves. Teaching to the child's repertoire involves using what is half-right to get to new learning: A teacher's actions are frequently positive responses to a child's partially correct responses.

Prompts in the Guidebook are calls for action on the part of the child. For example, when the teacher calls for the child to search for more information, she may provide a general response or one that directs the child to a particular source of information. However, all of these prompts are calls to action. For example, the teacher may call the child to search

- to find the error
- to find some alternatives
- to look at visual cues
- to sound parts of the word
- to make a choice
- to be flexible and change the response
- to be self-sufficient in solving the problem, (Clay, 1991, p. 301)

To foster active learning, the teacher has to plan to encourage a self-extending system by:

- giving the child ways to detect errors for himself;
- encouraging attempts to correct error;.
- giving him clues to aid self-correction;
- allowing him to make checks or repetitions so he can confirm;
- helping him to know how he did it when he works out something for himself (Clay, 1993b, p. 15).

"Acceleration is achieved as the child takes over the learning process and works independently, discovering new things for himself inside and outside the lessons. He comes to push the boundaries of his own knowledge . . ." (Clay, 1993b, p. 9). This process takes place over time, and teachers must be careful not to establish a pattern early on where the child waits for the teacher to do the work. Each child, from the beginning of his program, needs to learn that he must work at a difficulty, he must take some initiative, and he must make some links.

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Figure 2

1 Used	STRATEGIES 2 Prompted
- [stops/rereads] horse	What would make sense? [pause] Look at the picture.
√	Confirm: working it out
chicken ["No!"] hen	Confirm: noticing
sucker /A lollipop	Does that look right? [pause] Look at first letter.
SC on reread	Confirm: Fixed it up